DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 066 243 RC 006 360

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TITLE	The Relationship Between Educational Policy and Rural Development Needs: A Conceptual Overview.
INSTITUTION	Prairie View A and M Coll., Texas.; Texas A and M Univ., College Station. Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	TAES-H-2811
PUB DATE	Aug 72
NOTE	21p.; Paper presented at Third World Congress of Rural Sociology, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, August 22-27, 1972
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Agriculture; Community Development; *Cultural Factors; Educational Change; *Educational Policy; Human Resources; *Rural Areas; *Rural Development; Social Differences; *Sociology

ABSTRACT

A set of conceptual schemes that can provide a partially articulated framework to serve as a basis to relate educational policy to the ends of rural development is described in this paper. Education is viewed in a sociological perspective as a process and as a social institution. Rural development as a social process is examined by means of a broad-based sociological focus in which societal variation is a major factor. Additional information is included in 5 diagrams. (PS)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS: A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW*

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*Keynote paper of the Seminar on Educational Policy and Rural Development, Third World Congress of Rural Sociology, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, August 22-27, 1972. The development of this paper was supported by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Prairie View A&M College as a contribution to their Rural Development Research Program and by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas A&M University as a contribution to TAES project H-2811 and USDA, CSRS regional research project S-81" Development of Human Resource Potentials of Rural Youth in the South and Their Patterns of Mobility", (State Experiment Stations in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina and ERIC-CRESS, New Mexico State University are also cooperating in the regional USDA project).

RC006360

INTRODUCTION

As can be seen from a brief perusal of the papers listed for presentation in this seminar, they vary tremendously in scope, focus, and method. The papers you will hear over the next few days range in scope of concern from classes of societies, through a particular nation, to particular small-scale and limited developmental educational programs. Yet, the primary interest of all the authors is with the overriding question that guides this seminar - how can educational policy (or programs or practices) be fitted to the ends of rural development. It is our intention here to provide a set of conceptual schemes that can provide a partially articulated framework to serve as a basis to relate these diverse efforts to one another. Also, the framework will illuminate problem areas we have perhaps ignored (at least in our papers) but which are useful areas for investigation and reflection.

We visualize this as a creative, synthesizing work in conceptual ordering and clarification. As far as we know, nobody has tried to develop such a statement - and we believe this is part of the reason for the uncertain and cloudy understanding of the problems entailed in and related to the process of rural development of a general sociological framework that can illuminate the potential problems in attempting to relate educational policy in a direct and rational way to rural development in any society.

Our first problem was to contend with the lack of clarity in shared meaning associated with the ideas of "education" and, in particular "rural development".

EDUCATIONAL POLICY ?

Perhaps one of the reasons we have difficulty in producing clear and concise understandings for these ideas is that we (Rural Sociologists) have been too willing to accept the limited understandings of the idea of "educational policy" handed to us by Educators and of the idea "rural development" lifted from the concerns of Agricultural Economists.[1] In both cases there would appear to be a tendency to view both ideas in too restricted and narrow a fashion to have broad sociological utility: to think of education, on the one hand, in terms of schools, teachers, and classes and of rural development, on the other hand, in terms of agriculture or economics (or both). Can we put these common, restricting understandings aside, and seek sociological conceptions for these ideas? Let us try, at least, and see if the broader meanings have some utility in helping us to articulate the apparently somewhat chaotic set of efforts now parading under the label of rural development efforts.

Educational Policy: A Sociological Perspective

Education can be viewed as a process (dynamic) or as a social institution (static).[2] As a process, education can be defined as deliberate action aimed at accomplishing learning of cultural attributes by individuals. These attributes include Cognitive Modes of Operation, Knowledge, Beliefs, Norms, Social Roles, Skills and Habitual Patterns, and Understanding of Self. As a social institution, Education refers to the complex of social structures within an identifiable social system utilized in the process of education. In this sense education is an analytical construct and can not be viewed as a concrete entity, corresponding to any single concrete unit or class of units (i.e., schools). Likewise the "educator" and the "educated" are not restricted to the formal

social roles of "teacher" and "student" respectively. There is in reality no system, tole, or age restrictions implicit in the process defined above.

Educational policy implies a recognition that the learning of cultural attributes can be controlled, at least to some extent. This means that some unit or units can enforce direction of education over others (or some others) in a particular social system. Implementation of policy is then social control and implies use of social power (or threat of its use) to apply sanctions. A definition? How about this: educational policy refers to a set of general normative statements that are maintained to give direction to and regulate the process of education, and to initiate, maintain, or alter the structural aspects of the institution of education. Effective policy exists at that lowest level of social organization within a society that has the social power to implement it (the family, the community, or the state). It is these norms that indicate in any particular social context who is to direct the educational process, who is to be exposed to it and in what way, and what substance is to be involved. As an aside, it should be noted that learning of cultural attributes does occur outside of the deliberate education process through informal socilaization and, therefore, even when rigorously controlled, offers no guarantee of total formative capability over individuals.

It is obvious to us that educational policy (if it can be assumed to be a cultural universal) must have an impact on all human and social development in any society, and derivatively on the social units included in whatever is defined to be the rural sector of that society. But the variable nature of the normative statements involved and of the process of their implementation from one society to another preclude any simple general statements about what should be done about educational policy to adhance rural development. Within any societal framework the implementation of educational policy consists of a very complex set of

interactions involving units at a number of different levels of social organization and many units at the same level of social organization.[4] In Diagram 1 we have tried to illustrate this complexity simply in terms of different levels of inclusiveness of social organization generally involved in most societies, noting points of articulation that are likely to produce policy leakage (transformation) in the process of interlinking unit levels.

Variations Among Societies: A Speculative Framework

It can be assumed that societies (or, at least, types of society) will vary considerably in the nature of educational policy extant or, perhaps, even possible. Various answers will be given to the questions of who determined policy and who implements it (at what level), who is to be educated in what way, what priorities are to be given to what cultural attributes involved, and, even what content is to be excluded.[5] However, there are certain agents or agencies (of socialization) within almost every society which will have structural components contributing to the educational process, Diagram 2. It is our contention that there is always some degree of strain between the local systems and the extralocal systems in the nature of the educational content desired for the individual - this of course provides the individual with sets of optional structures to utilize, but not in a perfectly free manner. It can obviously be deduced from our typology in Diagram 2 that those societies giving primacy to the state (society) over subunits are predicted to be able to bring about change (and development) more readily through use of educational policy than in the opposite case. We have elaborated on this idea in Diagram 3 to build a predictive scheme of potential for realizing effective general educational policy aimed at social development in different kinds of society. The underlying assertions here are that concentration of social power and homogeneity of culture simplify and expedite the formation, legitimation,

Diagram 1. Complexity of Educational Decision Making: Levels of Social Organization and The Educational Process

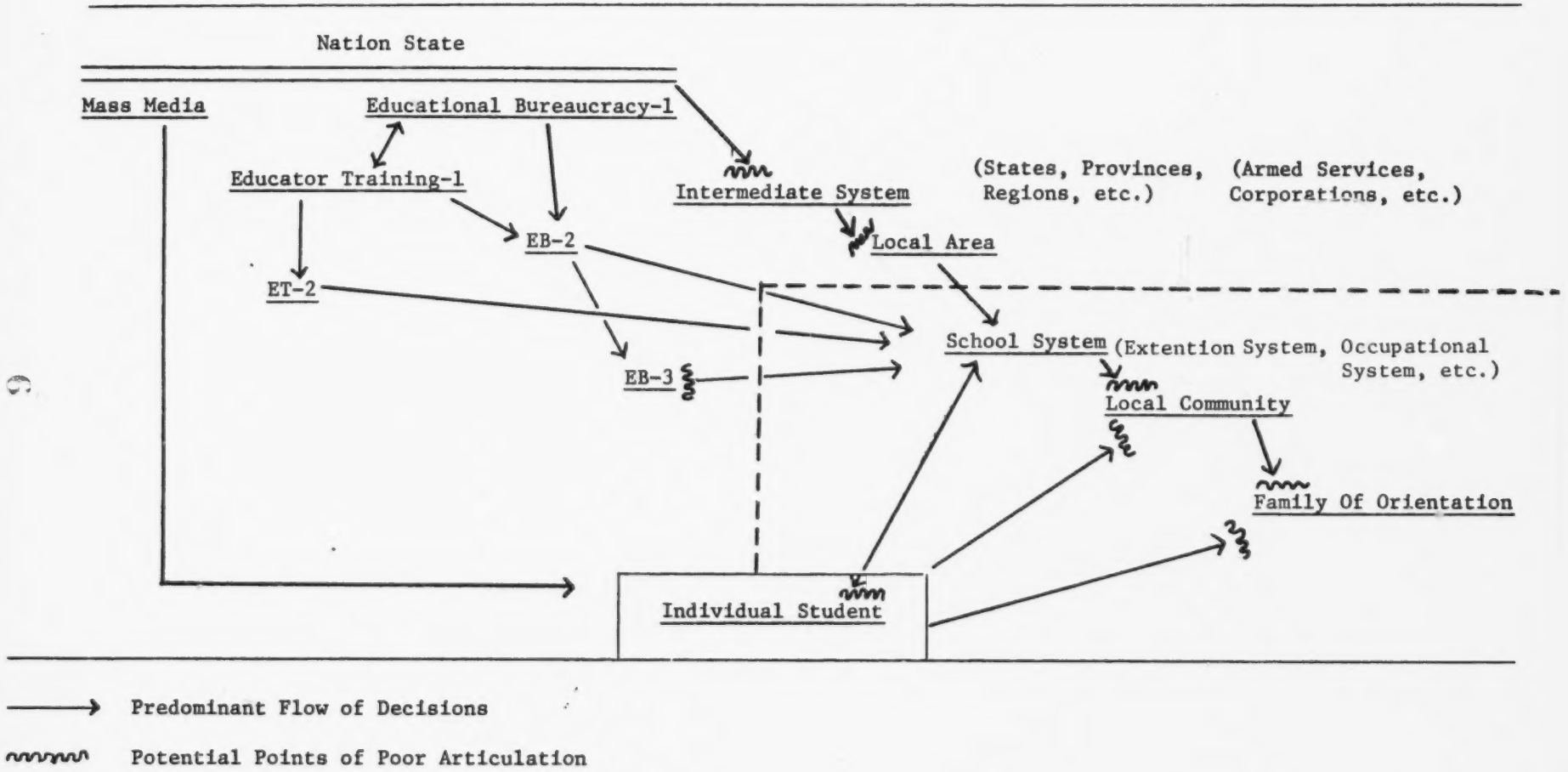


Diagram 2. Extra-Local vrs. Local Potential Agents and Agencies of Developmental Education

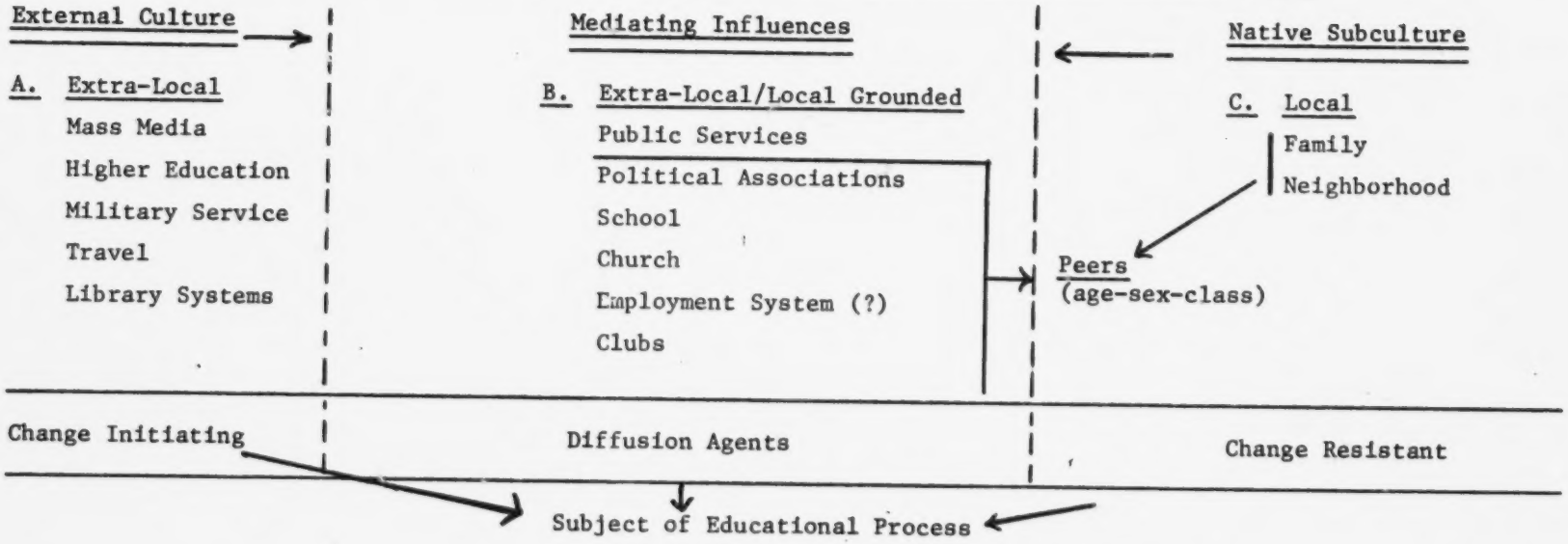


Diagram 3. Societal Typology: Social Power, Cultural Diversity, and Probability for Effective General Educational Policy Aimed at Social Development.

Concentration of Social Power	Cultural Diversity -		 +
	Type I	Type II	Type III
+	Homogeneous	Marked Subcultures	Multicultural
	----------Probability for General Development Policy----------		
Type A Highly Concentrated at National Level	Highest Probability + +	High +	Low -
Type B Concentrated at Level of Intermediate Political Subsystem	?	?	Low -
Type C Diffuse - Local Autonomy -	Low	Low -	Lowest Probability - -

and implementation of any general societal policies.

Of course this does not mean that in any particular case that a society of the "I-A" type will be fertile ground for such a development - just the opposite could be the case if either the power holders of citizens-at-large were opposed to rural development or the educational policy developed to facilitate it. On the other hand, a society of the I-C type could never evolve a general educational policy and implement it. Under such circumstances broad, significant rural development is impossible - the only alternative is an expensive, long-term program aimed at individual subunits most likely to be receptive to rural development. It is quite possible that not only deucational policy may have to change (or be initiated) to bring about rural development, but that in some cases the social fabric of the nation would have to change first. Certainly, the kind of variations we have been discussing - whether you agree with our propositions or not - should be taken into consideration when evaluating the "what" and "how" of educational policy needs for accomplishing rural development in any particular societal context. We assume that others presenting papers in this seminar will illustrate this need.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT?

"Rural development" has a wide variety of meanings and is, perhaps, at this time, simply a pragmatic label most generally connoting a concern for helping rural communities, rural people, or the industry of agriculture. Currently it has become a common practice to invoke this now popular label in the U.S., at least, to gain attention and even legitimation for research and action programs, with little regard for what is implied by the term.[6]

Traditionally the term has most commonly been used to refer to agricultural development in a broad sense and "human resource" (i.e., economic) development in a similar fashion. More recently it has taken on another strong dimension, that of community development. Clearly, in any hinterland area the three foci mentioned above interact and are important parts of a broader conception of social development of hinterland areas and regions. It is our judgement, however, that the tendency to narrowly define "rural development" in various ways impedes a clear conception of what is entailed in bringing about broad, lasting social change toward an improved state of existence for rural people, however they are delineated from others. We don't intend to get into the problem of variable definitions of rurality here--a number of others have grappled with it in recent published efforts.[1]

Rural Development As A Social Process

Given some definition of what the rural sector of society is, rural development from a sociological perspective is simply social development (change) of that sector and its constituent social units in reference

to some desired end state. This understanding comes closer in its implications for action to Durkheim's conception of sociological postivism and to our more recent melioratively oriented ancestors in Rural Sociology than to the more restricted and parochial visions many of us have today.[8] It involves a macro-emphasis--the study of society in terms of its constituent concrete and analytical units and master processes (including political movements and economic relations). It includes a wholistic tendency for concern with the whole system and with the complex interactions of its parts--rather than with the narrow, partial, and often parochial perspectives most prevalent in our collective efforts today, at least in the U.S. Whatever the case, rural development involves at least two assumptions: society can be changed for the better and this change can be facilitated through the application of understanding gained of society's structures and process by the social sciences. However, divergence among would-be developers can be expected in terms of what needs to be changed, how it is to be changed, and who should have the power to implement the change. These apparently discordant views are a reflection of the complexity that must be dealt with in broad societal development as a broad, all-inclusive process of social change and of different variations regarding how quickly change should move.

Perhaps it is time to give a more precise sociological definition of rural development. Rural development is a process of deliberate change in structural patterns within the rural sector of society and between this and other sectors of society, relative to a specified desired end state. Visually the idea can be depicted as follows:

$$\text{Social Development} = \left\{ \frac{\text{Social Unit (Rural Sector) Over Time}}{\underset{\text{(Initial Unit)}}{T^1 \text{ State}} \quad \underset{\text{Deliberate Actions Relative To Desired End}}{\text{Structural Change}} \quad \underset{\text{(Developed Unit)}}{T^2 \text{ State}}} \right.$$

Societal Variation

What rural development means within a particular societal context is, like educational policy, going to be dependent on the nature of the values and priorities of that society. Is the principal concern to be with development of a strong nation state, viable communities, or individual human potentials? Is the economic factor given precedence over social cohesion, or, are either (or both) of these given less value than development of individual potential and self-satisfaction? The way these prime social values are structured in a hierarchy of importance will have impact on the nature of the desired end state specified for the process of rural development. We need to understand clearly and precisely what the objects of rural development are.[1] This I think is where the rural sociologist can play a key role. What is the desired end state of the concrete social units to be involved in the development processes? What kind of structural changes does this imply in the nature of the existing units? What kind of negative, as well as positive, changes can be anticipated by alternative programs of rural development at the various levels of complexity of social organization and among different classes of social units at the same levels? Perhaps simply making developers aware of the complex interactions involved and the multiple ramifications of any simply program for a particular class of units (individuals, schools, farms, communities) and other interacting classes of units would help assure the development of more effective policies and programs.

A Sociological Focus

As rural sociologists we have had a tendency to key on other's priorities in viewing the ends of rural development. But if it is conceived of as a

broad societal process, there are social problems requiring attention that are uniquely sociology's concerns--aside from development of economic resources, abilities of individuals, efficency of formal task organizations. In the end, these may turn out to be the most important of all structural aspects in the conceptualized desired state to be aimed for. What we are talking about is the nature of the relationships existing among groups, associations, and organizations in a society's rural sector or between rural and urban units. These considerations directly determine the amount of cohesion in a given society or some part of it, and, derivatively influence the probability and nature of change that is likely to take place within it. At a very abstract level we have diagramed alternative "forms of social contact"and, under "social interaction" (one form of contact) a second level of "forms of social relationships", diagrams 4 and 5. Obviously the conceptualized end state required for any rational social development process must not only look at the structural nature (desired attributes) of social units involved but must also consider how these units relate to one another and to the larger system.

Within a more inclusive unit, social isolation of subunits often constitutes a source of extreme stress and a state of deprivation for the subunits involved. Should this concern be a part of our conception for rural development? What is the appropriate form of relationship structure, relative to other ends that should be strive for, among farms, among occupational classes, among communities, among different levels of government, and among individuals within an occupational system? Given a particular societal context, when does cooperation among what units foster development? Does this type of relationship actually exist? If not, how can the educatinnal process be used to alter it? It is our judgement that these kinds of questions

are inherently in the main sociological, but have largely been ignored as a consequence of the traditional narrowly conceived, partial views of development as a social process.

Diagram 4 . Forms of Social Contact

Social Isolation

Permeability of Boundaries
- +

[Contactual Behavior

Social Contact - None
Physical Contact - Yes
or Proximity]

Social Interaction

Frequency
- +

Intensity
- +

Assimilation

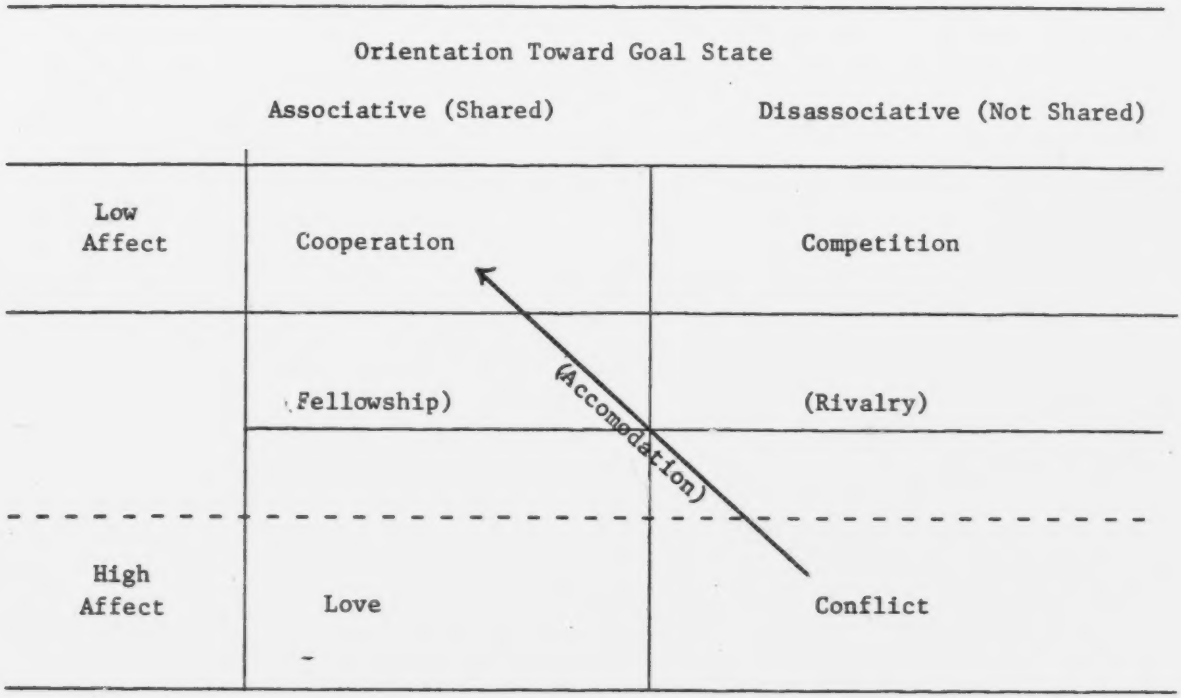
Structural Scope
- +

Fractionalization

Structural Scope
- +

○ = Social Unit that is identifiable as a separate entity from all others.

Diagram 5. Forms of Unit Relationships



THE BEARING OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Given that every nation has educational policies effective at some level of its social organization, and which impacts in one way or another on every constituent community and most citizens, this policy will have a direct effect on potential for rural development. Since educational policy is structured deliberately to provide direction and limitations to the social process of education, it can not help but effect the potential for change that can occur in any given society--both in the sense of the normative statements it embodies and those that it does not.

Probably no structural aspect of a society has more bearing on the nature and degree of rural development possible than its educational policy. In fact, Kuvlesky has argued as a result of his research on low-income rural people in the U.S. that the only hope for relatively quick and broad improvement of life chances of rural people in this country is a high priority, general educational policy aimed at better serving rural communities and rural people. This does not mean that there are not other types of policies and programs that would facilitate broad, long-lasting rural development, but only that they are not as important. This general policy needs to take into account all educational structures (not only formal schooling) and all segment of the rural population (not just the young) to have maximum developmental impact.

Sociologists have a role to play of some importance in assistng in the development of such a general policy, derivative programs, delivery systems and roles, effective implementation of all of these, and evaluation of impacts. Education can be viewed as the most general and powerful direct

force providing the stimulus for broad developmental change impacting simultaneously among units at varying levels of social organization and among social systems at the same levels within a society. But, to be effective as a development tool educational policy has to be general, nonconflicting in its component parts, well articulated through the complex levels of social levels of social organization that exists in any society, and backed with adequate sanctioning power.[11] In addition, it must be developed in conjunction with a clear conception of rural development which is comprehensive and inclusive in scope, but which also provides specific focus on particular target systems and delineates structural changes aimed for in these targets. The sociologist, and, only the sociologist, is generally in a position of broad enough knowledge of broad enough knowledge of social process and structural elements to monitor these complex considerations.

At the same time, we should not rest in applying our analytical understanding and conceptual tools to provide policy and program guidance to the developers and policy makers. We need to do research to describe more adequately the nature of educational policy and how it is implemented in different societies. We need to understand better (and describe to others more adequately) how variations in other structural dimensions influence the educational process. We need to delineate more clearly the ramifications of deliberate change of a particular kind in one sector or subunit of a society for other sectors or types of units.[10] We need to lend our assistance to evaluative research of experimental educational programs aimed at restricted targets or functions (whether or not we agree with them) so we can objectively evaluate intended consequences and reveal unintended ones of both + and - valence. Surely most so-called deliberate social experiments are rarely thoroughly studied by mental observors.

One possible guide to research opportunities of high policy relevance in any particular society might be gained by superimposing the conceptual schemes provided for forms of social contact and forms of social relationship (Diagram 4 and 5 respectively) upon the unspecified (and even latent) relationships implied in our sketches of interunit interactions among levels of social organization (Diagram 1) and, also, to the typology of educational agents and agencies (Diagram 2). Certainly, it is important to document what unit levels may be isolated from others and,given social interaction, the nature of the relationship that exists among different units. It would also seem fruitful to explore the possibility of latent conflict (accomodation) parading under the guise of cooperation or a lesser dissociative form in order to predict not yet obvious social impediments to educational policy aimed at development. Relative to alternative agents or ganecies of education one might pose the following questions: To what extent are units of different kinds aware aware of each others actual and potential educational function? Which cooperate in the educational process and which are in conflict? To what extent do higher level units effectively interpentrate with lower level units? The combination of the two sets of schemes (units and relations) offer many other possibilities for generating research possibilities. It will surprise us if some are not illuminated in other seminar papers.

In conclusion we have, with some difficulty, made a start toward evolving a broad frame of reference for a sociological orientation toward rural development as a type of broad social change and how educational policy as a set of normative statements regulating the education process relates to it. A frame we think which can embrace different disciplinary interests and diverse research and meliorative activities. Also, we have attempted to steer you toward a problem -laden dimension of social organization,

interunit relations, that has largely been ignored in relation to traditional rural development emphasis and attempted to raise some questions in this regard to stimulate discussion on research needs. We hope you will be generous in your constructive criticism so that we may further refine, modify, and articulate the conceptual base we have begun to put together here.

FOOTNOTES

1. Marshall R. Godwin and L.L. Jones, "The Need For A Wider Interface Among Social Scientists In Agriculture". Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Rural Sociological Society, Denver, August 27, 1971. (Mimeo)

2. Marion J. Levy, Jr. The Structure of Society. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952, Chpt. 2.

3. Ibid., pp. 88-109.

4. Society here is viewed as a rather loosly bonded collection of less inclusive systems organized within a set of well defined political boundaries and sharing a wide variety of common cultural attributes. These subsystems vary in complexity and inclusiveness. At a minimum every society will exhibit, at least, the following levels of social organization listed in order of increasing complexity: the individual personality, the family, local residence community, and the nation-state. Of course in all societies there are other levels of organization that intervene and interpenetrate among these (i.e. the military, large corporations, etc.).

5. Robert J. Havighurst (Ed.). Comparative Perspectives On Education. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968.

6. Robert C. Bealer, "Rural Development: Another Go-Around for Interdisciplinary Blunders". Paper presented at a Training Seminar in Rural Development, College of Agriculture, Texas A&M University, June, 1971. (Mimeo)

7. Among others see Robert C. Bealer, Fern K. Willits, and William P. Kuvlesky, "The Meaning of 'Rurality' in American Society: Some Implication of Alternative Definitions", RS, 30-3 (Sept., 1965), pp.255-266.

8. Nicholas S. Timasheff. Sociological Theory: Its Nature and Growth (Third Ed.) New York: Random House, 1967, Chpt. 9.

9. William P. Kuvlesky, "Rural Youth: Current Status and Prognosis" in Youth In Contemporary Society, Dave Gottlieb (Ed.), Sage Publications (Forthcoming).

10. Levy, Op.Cit., pp. 76-88.

11. Havighurst, Op.Cit.